

Borut, your Slovenian friend, wants to start going hiking in his free time but he is worried about getting lost. He has found an article on this issue, but his level of English is not good enough to understand it. Help him understand **the most relevant information**.

## HOW TO SURVIVE WHEN YOU ARE LOST IN THE WILD

There is a useful acronym for what to do when you're lost when hiking: STOP.

**S** is to simply stop. Frantically moving faster will only get you more lost. Sit, and breathe from your belly. Drink and eat. With any luck, your amygdala (the almond-size flight-or-fight controller in your head) will calm down and your cerebral cortex (responsible for rational thinking) will take over again.

**T** stands for think. Ask yourself some basic questions. Which direction were you going? What was the last landmark you recognized? How long ago was that? How far have you come since? Hiking on a trail with a pack, most people travel only about two miles per hour. When was the last time you knew where you were?

**O** is for observe. Look around you: can you see any landmarks? Can you recognize a mountain top or a picturesque valley? Try to find what you see around you on the map. Get out your camera, go back through the pictures and do the same thing. Think about time. How long have you been hiking? How long before sunset?

**P** means plan. Don't move until you have a plan. If you whistle, might someone hear you? Do you have enough daylight to try to retrace your route? Should you consider building a fire because it is almost dark?

And finally – can you make a call? Can you text? If you do get through, can you tell anyone where you are? Let's say your cellphone has no coverage and you don't know how to use a map and compass and you didn't take any pictures and you're a little panicky – you are an average lost person.

If you still have lots of daylight, it is often worth trying to retrace your path. Try to locate your footprints, or anything that's a sign of your passing. Leave obvious landmarks. If you don't hit a trail, and find yourself even more lost and confused, just start heading downhill.

If it's nearing night, stay. First, get warm. Try to find a natural shelter that might afford some protection from wind and rain. If you don't have any food left, don't worry about it: the human body can go weeks without food. Food is the least of your concerns. Water, on the other hand, is critical: depending on conditions, humans can live only three to six days without water. But don't go searching for water in the dark. Sit there, stay warm, and suffer through the night.

In the morning, reassess. If you think you might be able to retrace your steps back to a known location, try it. If this is not possible, whistle, hang all your bright clothes on tree limbs, use a mirror to bounce the sunlight in multiple directions, move to the top of a hill to get cellphone service.

If you do all these things, chances aren't bad that you'll be found. But after several days of waiting, don't let your energy get so low that you can't make a real effort to get out on your own.

Thousands of hikers get lost every year and manage to find their way out. A few navigational skills and the right equipment are useful, but common sense and equanimity are paramount. The truth is, getting lost doesn't kill anybody. You don't die from not knowing where you are – you die from bad decisions.

